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# The PALIMPSEST

MAY 1936

## CONTENTS

*Amana — In Transition*

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

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### THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

### THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

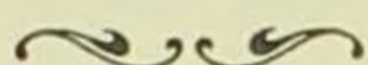
EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## Amana — In Transition

In one of the garden spots of Iowa there is a charming little valley from which the surrounding hills recede like the steps of a Greek theater. Through this valley the historic Iowa River flows peacefully to the eastward. A closer view reveals seven old-fashioned villages nestling among the trees or sleeping on the hillsides. About these seven villages stretch twenty-six thousand goodly acres clothed with fields of corn, pastures, meadows, vineyards, and seas of waving grain. Beyond and above, surrounding the little valley are richly timbered hills, forming as though by design a frame for this quaint picture of Amana — the Iowa home of the historic Community of True Inspiration.

Nowhere in America do the habitations of men seem to merge so naturally into their physical environment as do the villages of Amana. They give the impression of a permanency that is beyond the reach of a changing world. And yet within



these quiet villages, within the solemn circling hills of Amana, profound changes are taking place. Perhaps nowhere in America have transformations in community life and individual living been so great as at Amana in recent years. And yet the Great Change occurred as calmly as a sunset, as quietly as the dawn of a new day, without ceremony and without excitement.

Oddly enough, while much of the unrest of the world is seeking relief in trends that are communistic and socialistic, long-time communistic Amana seems to have found salvation in a modified, coöperative capitalism, with wages, profits, and private ownership, in which communism functions as an overtone.

Here is a community that, having functioned for seven generations as a benevolent and self-perpetuating church autocracy, is now operating as a one-man-one-vote industrial democracy — a community of approximately 1500 people living in seven villages organized as a joint-stock company. In this corporation the stockholders, who are both owners and employees, have two main objectives: remunerative employment under an individualistic wage system, and industrial profits sufficient to pay a reasonable rate of interest on capital investment.

How much the incentives of the new order



quicken the tempo of this community in transition is revealed in the fact that two hundred outside "hands" employed by the old community were summarily dismissed (with an incidental saving of \$60,000 annually). Even then there were scarcely enough jobs for all the members of the Community when the machinery of the new Amana Society was set in motion.

A business manager from outside the Society (but subject to the direction and control of the governing Board of Directors) was employed to assist in putting the new corporation on a sound financial basis by reorganizing the entire occupational and industrial life of the people. In an incredibly short time the whole community (to whom time had really never mattered much, since for generations they had been unaccustomed to anything like a unit for measuring work) learned to respond to the whistle, to punch the time clock, and to check off hours in the field and in the factory.

In the reorganized Amana Society, the General Office has become the hub of the new corporation. Here all corporation buying and disbursing for all of the seven villages is centered. Here the managers of some sixty-one different businesses and industrial units report daily. Indeed, every employee entrusted with a corporation commission, large or small, reports daily to the General Office.



That much latent managerial sagacity and practical genius has been released throughout the Community is evidenced by the fact that all of the corporation businesses are making good returns on the capital invested.

Along with the free play of individual initiative (particularly among the younger leaders) there is manifest a deep sense of community responsibility and a genuine spirit of unselfish devotion to *the cause*, which is reminiscent of the old sense of obligation of the "specially endowed Brethren" who in their day gave so freely of their talents and skill for the common good.

Agriculture, which was the chief occupation of the old Community, is still the major industry in the new Community. Eighty per cent of the corporation's capital is invested in the farm departments (which include the timber lands). About forty per cent of the gainfully occupied people are now employed in the farm departments.

While agricultural Amana suffered its share of losses during the depression (1930-1935) and the drought (1934), there were no applications from the Amana Society for Federal loans. To be sure the corn-hog program was subscribed to, but this was done more with a sense of loyalty to and in a spirit of coöperation with the government than to obtain relief. Amana has its own definite agricul-



tural program which includes soil conservation, livestock improvement, and timber processing.

The timber resources of Amana are of the highest type in the State of Iowa; and the problem of winter unemployment in the farm departments has been partly solved by the establishment of a wood-working shop or factory for the manufacture of axe handles, wagon tongues, and other wood products for the farm use. In the late fall and winter, farm workers and farm equipment are used in cutting and hauling timber for use in this factory.

Next in importance to agriculture among the major industries at Amana are the woolen mills which have long been famous for the high quality of their output. Woolen mills were operated by the Community as early as 1838 in Germany. To-day they represent about eighteen per cent of the total capitalization of the corporation.

Like all other textile mills during the recent world-wide economic depression, the Amana mills reached the lowest point in sales in their long history. But with an adjustment in prices (resulting in a smaller margin of profit) the mills of Amana were kept running and the workers were employed continuously throughout the depression — which is more than can be said of their contemporaries in the outside business world during the same period. With the general upturn in the textile industries



the Amana woolen mills have operated at full capacity.

Through the gentle discipline of the old order some of the village stores had been ready buyers and easy creditors, and so had become a community luxury. Under the new order this situation was soon liquidated, and centralized buying and daily reports to the General Office have resulted in large savings. The corporation stores have now become one of the three major industries.

The cabinet shop of old Amana (long known for its excellent workmanship) has expanded under the new regime into "the furniture factory" for hand-made furniture of black walnut from the Society's own timber. Quaint reproductions of old models in the manner and in the spirit of the craftsmen of an earlier period made so great an appeal that "the factory" outgrew its quarters. It is now housed in what was once the calico printing works where its display room has become a center of interest for automobile tourists.

Another industry (reminiscent of the long ago in the Old World) which has been developed by the new corporation is the baking of bread in brick ovens — ovens in which the bread of the Community has been baked on the heated brick floor for eighty years. The original huge, round, crusty "Colony loaf", having been reduced in size to two



pounds, now finds a ready market as "the only bread in the country baked on a hearth". Fifty per cent or more of the output of the Amana bakeries is trucked daily to cities and towns within a radius of fifty miles. The bakeries with their old brick ovens, the round, rye straw baskets in which the raising loaves are held, and the long-handled wooden paddles which are used for putting the loaves into the oven and in removing them when baked, still attract visitors from the outside world.

And the women of Amana, they too, feel the spur of the new incentives. To be sure, individual household management has brought to the housewife many unaccustomed burdens and responsibilities; but there is evident compensation in the joy of freedom and self-expression. As stockholders in the corporation, the women of Amana enjoy the privilege of voting equally with the men.

There are women workers in the woolen mills and in the stores, as well as in the clerical force of the General Office. The corporation "crop gardens" for the raising of cabbages, beans, potatoes, and onions are cultivated by women whose home duties permit. They are employed by the corporation on the same basis as men; and they enjoy their wage money quite as keenly. Recently the knitting of children's mittens has developed among the women as a home industry — one that brings



into play something of the artistic skills and talents which were so much in evidence in the more leisurely tempo of old Amana.

In the early days of reorganization it was the policy of the corporation to operate only those shops which met the actual needs of the corporation: the people were encouraged to buy and to operate for themselves the smaller industries or businesses. But as time passes there seems to be no great desire on the part of the members of the Society to be occupationally independent of the business corporation; and so, there is a tendency for the corporation to take on more business in order to give employment to more members — all of which is reminiscent of the communism of old Amana.

There is a growing realization that the economic prosperity of each individual member of the Society depends largely upon the economic prosperity of the business corporation. The conscious recognition of this fundamental truth has greatly strengthened the willingness of all members of the Community to coöperate, without which there can be no lasting achievement in social endeavor.

Indeed, it may be said that the achievements of Amana in transition are due in large measure to this spirit of coöperation which is supplemented by a willingness on the part of the individual mem-



bers of the Community to recognize, place in control, and loyally support intelligent leadership. Within a period of four years revolutionary changes in the social, economic, and religious life of the seven villages of Amana have taken place without fear, force, favor, or propaganda.

Who knows but that in solving her own problems, Amana may turn pilot for a world in search of safer lanes to the shores of a better land of economic and social justice?

Significant of the new day in Amana is a change in attitude toward the recreational and social activities of the young people. At the very beginning of the new venture, under broad-minded and far-seeing leadership, community welfare organizations were formed with the primary object of providing for the "unemployed emotions" and leisure of the younger generation now freed of many of the restraints of the old brotherhood.

To-day the young people have their own supervised dances, sometimes with an orchestra hired from the outside. A sprinkling of men and women of middle age come to these dances to enjoy their first "parties".

The community halls are open as recreational centers. Plays are prepared and presented; community picnics are planned; and all American holidays are observed. In short the entire community,

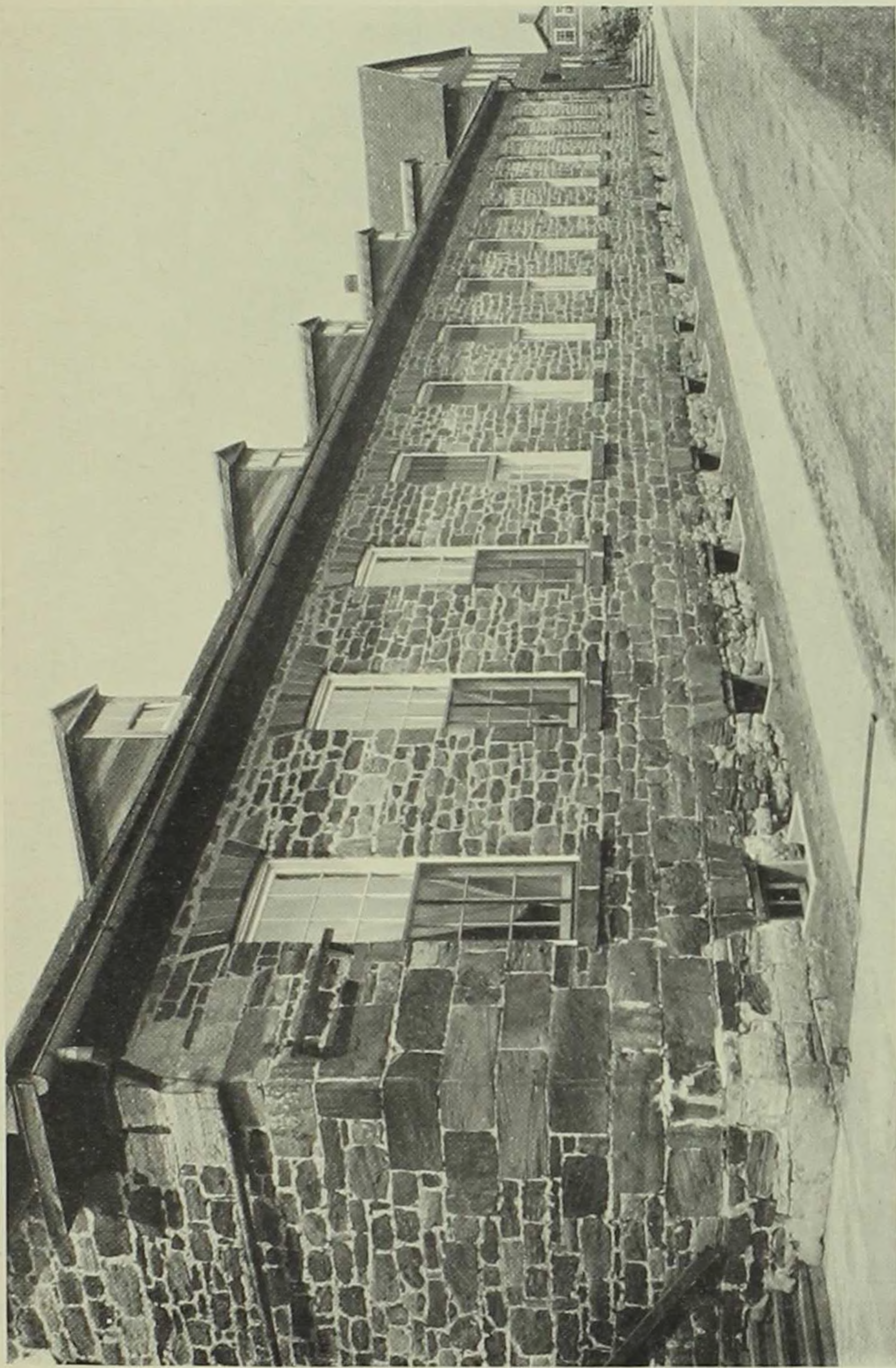


in which eleven or more religious meetings a week were once the principal source of recreation, is now learning to play in worldly ways. The fact that the members of Amana in the day of their "emancipation" show a growing preference for their own social activities is evidence of the wisdom of middle-aged leaders in meeting to-day's problems with to-day's techniques.

Boy Scout and other "growing-up youth" organizations as well as modern Sunday schools have come into the picture of new Amana with astonishing rapidity. The annual camporal of the Boy Scouts of Iowa County (with all of its ceremonials, awards, contests, and over-night camping) which was held in Middle Amana in 1934 with more than half of the entire population of the seven villages as visitors and spectators, tells the story of the new outlook at Amana.

In the old Community there was only an occasional car owned by the doctor or by officials whose business made it necessary. But with the appearance of the individual purse in the new order, automobiles came upon the Amana scene so rapidly that it gave the management some concern. Of course the centralization of business in the General Office made the ownership of automobiles necessary for many persons. Bringing the high school pupils together at Middle Amana gave rise

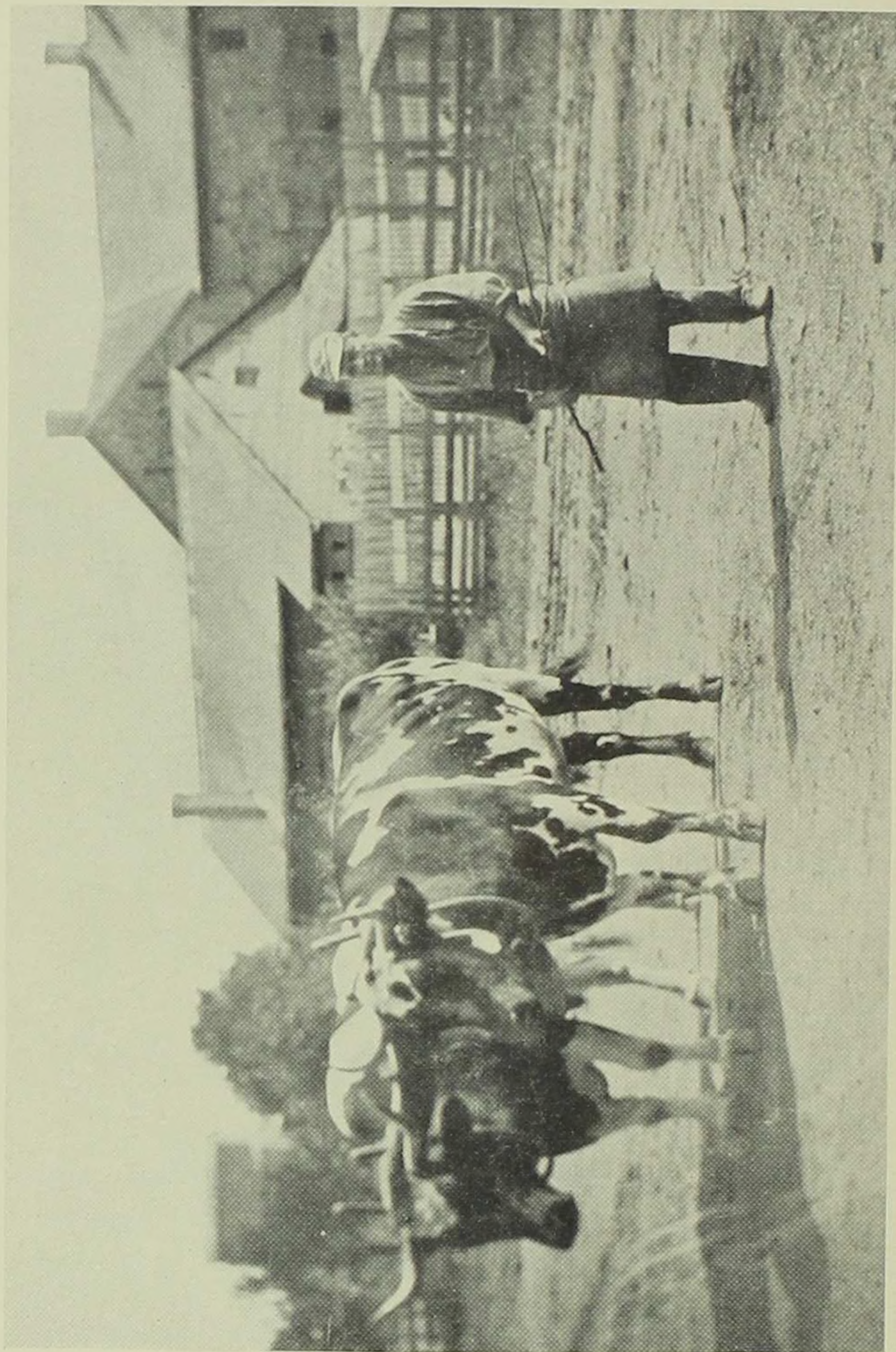




FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY F. W. KENT

THE CHURCH IN AMANA — AS IT WAS AND STILL IS





FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

EVENTIDE IN OLD AMANA



to another need for the automobile. And where there was no actual need the presence of so many privately owned cars made possession desirable — even as in every other Iowa village. And so along with the problem of equipping a family kitchen came the problem of housing the family car.

The automobile has promoted sociability among the inhabitants of the seven villages; and this in turn has promoted unity and brought about a better understanding of the real significance of the new venture. Likewise excursions with the family car beyond the boundaries of the Amanas have given members a better understanding of their own Community: "He knows not England who only England knows."

It is noteworthy that more than one skilled artisan has refused what would be counted an attractive wage in the outside world for the advantages he finds in Amana with its new economic system, its individual freedom, its better living conditions for his growing family, its church, its schools, its traditions and affections, and its customs and associations of generations which have indeed lifted above the commonplace the seven villages which he calls Home.

A new and modernly equipped high school at Middle Amana, which is easily accessible to the youth of all the villages, is one of the proud



achievements of the new Amana Society. It is here, in this highly cultural enterprise, that the people of Amana have given worthy expression of their eager ambitions to participate in an unfolding and infinitely interesting world. The curriculum of this school wisely provides for the preservation of old loyalties along with the cultivation of new understandings.

In the center of the high school building is a little theater with a sloping auditorium floor and a thoroughly modern stage. In its dramatic work the high school not only gives excellent training to its students, but furnishes to the Community some wholesome entertainment. Here in this little theater many a grandfather and grandmother have witnessed their first play.

And the Church, so dear to the heart of the older generation now past the age of adventure and of interest in solving problems, has been reorganized as The Amana Church Society. Freed of many of its old encumbrances the Amana Church remains the custodian of old memories and customs and the conservator of the Community conscience.

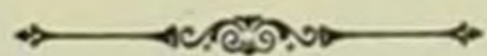
While the new secular Amana Society and the reorganized Amana Church Society are separate and distinct organizations, there exists between them an interlocking of temporal and spiritual interests, of benevolences and charities, of stock



shares, and of corporation privileges and profits that makes Amana unique in the annals of corporate endeavor.

Back of that significant moment in June, 1932, when *Amana That Was* passed into the realm of the "once upon a time" and *Amana That Is* set sail on a new industrial sea, stretch more than two centuries of history to which the present unparalleled adventure in community life owes in large measure its workability. It is in the history of the old Community of True Inspiration that one must search for a meaningful interpretation and an intelligent understanding of much that is happening at Amana to-day.

Somewhere in the background of seven generations of common hopes and aspirations, of sacrifice and struggle, somewhere in seven generations of faith and confidence in leaders and a willingness to follow intelligent guidance, lies the explanation of Amana's daring to adventure in an era of distrust and of opposition to the new and untried.



To the German Mystics and Pietists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Amana as we know it to-day traces its origin — particularly to that little branch of the Pietists which arose during the last quarter of the seventeenth century and whose followers are said to have "prophesied like



the prophets of old" and were called "Inspirationists".

As a distinct religious sect the Community of True Inspiration (so-called by its followers) dates from the year 1714 with the writings and teachings of Eberhard Ludwig Gruber and Johann Friedrich Rock, who are regarded as its real founders. Protesting against the dogmatism of the Lutheran Church and refusing to conform to its ritual, and declining to perform military duty or to take the legal oath, the Inspirationists were persecuted and prosecuted.

It was a simple faith that held together the early congregations of Inspirationists despite humiliation and torture. It was the faith and belief that divine inspiration and revelation are just as real to-day as in the time of Moses. And so, from time to time, spiritual leaders arose and "prophe-sied like the prophets of old"; and all their sayings were faithfully recorded by scribes and published as sacred "Testimonies".

Although the Community of True Inspiration enjoyed the spiritual leadership of a very considerable number of great personalities, it was to the religious zeal and practical genius of Christian Metz, a young carpenter of Ronneburg (the early rallying ground of the Inspirationists) that the Community owed its greatest debt.



It was Christian Metz who first conceived the idea of leasing large German estates in common as a refuge for the faithful; and while the original intention had been to live together simply as a congregation or church, Christian Metz foresaw that a system of communism would be the natural outcome of the mode of life which these people had been forced to adopt. And he foresaw, too, that exorbitant rents and unfriendly governments in the Old World would one day make it necessary for the Inspirationists to find a home in the New World where the Inspirationists and their children could "live in peace and liberty".

Every idealistic institution is but the "lengthening shadow of a man". At its best the Community of True Inspiration was the vitalized shadow of its most gifted spiritual guide and temporal leader, Christian Metz. While it is true that a great man is never greater than when he is no longer present, Christian Metz, judged by the evidence of contemporary records, was that "highest miracle of all, a man who is both great and good".

Able and devoted Brothers there were who aided in the organization and upbuilding of the Amana estate, but it was the long cherished hopes and dreams of Christian Metz that gave direction to the development of the Community. His spirit was the spirit of Amana. For half a century after



his death, Amana was indeed the lengthening shadow of Christian Metz.

But lengthening shadows fade as the sun drops in the west; and memories grow dim as the ripening grasses ripple and wave year after year over the graves of the Forefathers. Succeeding generations give new trends to an old culture. The few who invariably sacrifice for the good of the many are the first to see that a new day has arisen and that a new structure must be erected to meet it. In the third decade of the twentieth century the lengthening shadow of Christian Metz had all but disappeared.

It was in 1842 that a committee of four, led by Christian Metz, set out to find a new home in America; and it was their sincere and devout belief that the journey had been "ordained and directed by divine revelation". For three months these conscientious Inspirationists, ever mindful of the responsibilities that rested with them, suffered the winter wind and cold of the region of the Great Lakes while they examined tracts of land, dealt with unscrupulous land companies, and weighed the advantages of various situations. In the end they purchased as much as 8000 acres including the Seneca Indian Reservation near Buffalo, in Erie County, New York.

Within four months of the purchase of the Res-



ervation the first village of the Community was laid out and peopled. Five others were soon established, and more than eight hundred members crossed the water to join the group of pioneers at "Eben-ezer" — so named in a song by Christian Metz and recorded before the final purchase was made.

Each village had its store, its school, and its church; and soon there arose the cheerful hum of sawmills, woolen mills, and flour mills. A temporary constitution providing for "common possessions" was adopted, and the Community was formally organized under the name of "Ebenezer Society". For twelve years the Inspirationists toiled in the mills and factories and tilled the newly broken fields when it became apparent that more land than was available so near the growing city of Buffalo would be necessary to accommodate the increasing membership. And once more a committee of four, with Christian Metz as its leader, was "ordained and directed" to go forth to "find a new home in the far West". After a fruitless journey to Kansas, government lands in Iowa County, Iowa, were described in such glowing terms that a purchase of nearly 18,000 acres was made without further delay.

A better location or more valuable tract of land than the new site in Iowa could hardly be imag-



ined. Through it ran the beautiful Iowa River bordered with the wonderful black soil of its wide valley. On one side were the bluffs and the uplands covered with a luxuriant growth of timber — promising an almost limitless supply of fuel and building material. There were quarries of sandstone and limestone along the river; while the clay in the hills was suitable for the manufacture of brick. On the other side of the river stretched the rolling prairie land. To the Inspirationists, who had been obliged to cut heavy timber and remove stones and boulders from the Ebenezer land before it could be tilled, the long green stretches of virgin prairie “ready for the plow” seemed the most wonderful feature of the splendid new domain on which all the hopes of the future were centered.

But it takes more than a beautiful location and natural resources to make a successful community: it takes moral earnestness and untiring industry. These the Inspirationists brought with them to their new home. Then, too, the Ebenezer experiment had added twelve years of experience in pioneering. Unlike Etienne Cabet’s French tailors and shoe-makers of the Icarian Community, the Inspirationists knew how to turn the matted sod of the prairie. Bountiful harvests rewarded their industry and skill.

With a will they set to work to cut the timber



and quarry the stone and build once more houses, shops, mills, factories, churches, and schoolhouses. They planted orchards and vineyards, and purchased flocks and herds. They revived the old industries and started new ones.

There was no rush to the country so gloriously described by the Iowa fore-guards — though no one can doubt the eagerness with which every member looked forward to the upbuilding of the new home. The removal from Ebenezer extended over a period of ten years and was carried through with that prudence, judgment, and common sense which has always characterized these people in the conduct of their business affairs.

While one detail of members prepared the new home in Iowa, the other looked to the profitable selling of the old estate in New York. As they found purchasers for the latter, they sent families to the former. To their business credit it is recorded that they were able to dispose of the whole of the eight-thousand-acre tract in the State of New York with all the improvements without the loss of a single dollar, notwithstanding such a sale presented great difficulties — for the six communistic villages and their peculiar arrangement of buildings, with mills, factories, and work-shops had peculiarities which detracted from their value for individual uses. Much of the Ebenezer land



had been surveyed and laid out in lots; and when disposed of it was sold piece by piece, a task which required much time and patience.

The first village on the Iowa purchase was laid out during the summer of 1855 on a sloping hillside north of the Iowa River, and was called "Amana" by Christian Metz. The word signifies "remain true" or "believe faithfully", and was suggested, it is said, by the resemblance between the bluff overlooking the site of the new village and "the top of Amana" described in the Song of Solomon. Five more villages were laid out within a radius of six miles from Amana and were named in accordance with their locations, West Amana, South Amana, High Amana, East Amana, and Middle Amana.

Modeled after the country villages of middle Europe, the houses of the "Amana Colonies" (as they were commonly called) were clustered together on one long straggling street with several irregular offshoots, with the barns and sheds at one end, the factories and workshops at the other, and on either side the orchards, the vineyards, and the gardens.

Up to 1861 the nearest railroad station had been Iowa City, which was some twenty miles distant; but in that year the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad (now the Rock Island) was completed as far



as Homestead, a small town south of the Community's territory. Thereafter goods from the East were unloaded at Homestead, and it also formed the shipping point for the neighboring farming population. The Community saw the desirability of owning this railroad station, and so the entire village of Homestead was purchased.

By the time the sale of the Ebenezer land had been completed, the Community territory in Iowa consisted of 26,000 acres — which is approximately the amount owned by the Amana Society at the present time. With the exception of some 1700 acres in the adjoining county of Johnson, all of the land lies within Iowa County.

Two steps of great importance were taken by the Community soon after its removal to Iowa. One was its incorporation under the laws of the State as the "Amana Society"; and the other was the adoption of a new Constitution. As a matter of fact there were no radical changes made in this new draft of the fundamental law. Plans and policies for the establishment of a church brotherhood with "common estate and property" had been worked out in the Ebenezer Constitution which was simply remodeled to harmonize with new conditions. It was a simple document of ten short articles, and it remained in force until the Reorganization in 1932.



While it is true that Amana had won the distinction of being the oldest and the largest in the long list of communistic ventures on American soil, it is equally true that communism had ever been incidental to the life and thought of the Amana Community. The chief concern of the Community of True Inspiration was spiritual. Some care of the weaker and less gifted Brothers had characterized the early congregations, and always had the effort been made to find opportunity for each member to earn his living according to his calling or inclination. But in all the frank discussion recorded by "the old who no longer are" there is nothing to indicate that the "new spiritual economy" had in any way been influenced by the writings or the teachings of Etienne Cabet or other dreamers of Utopia.

Born of religious enthusiasm in the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Community of True Inspiration was primarily a church, and as such it lived for seven generations. "Common estate and property" and the blending of temporal rule and spiritual authority (both adopted in America under the leadership and the spiritual influence of the inspired prophet Christian Metz) merely carried the old religious ideal of "all that believed were together and had all things in common" to its logical conclusion.



Amana itself never regarded its communism as the working out of a social theory. It claimed only to be a church brotherhood whose structure, management, and control were born of necessity and circumstance. For generations the Community of True Inspiration had been a church that clothed and fed its members in a material as well as in a spiritual sense. So long as the faith that had brought the members together retained its glow and living power, just so long was it possible to maintain the integrity of the Church. And whatever the cause, whatever the motive, whatever the entering wedge, when the old bond was no longer strong enough to subordinate the *me* spirit to the *we* spirit, the ideal of "Brothers All" began to lose its practical significance.

Each of those early Iowa villages was a complete unit and maintained a certain sphere of independence in local administration; but each was under the general control of thirteen Trustees — The Great Council of the Brethren — who exercised both temporal and spiritual authority.

The element of individual freedom in the Amana Community has always been more or less disturbing to the theorist. Admittedly, Amana's village system was not economical. But it fostered a rather precious spirit of independence. While the house in which a family lived was com-



munity property, "home" was ever the sanctuary where its members, old and young, enjoyed a wholesome sphere of privacy and domestic independence. The annual sum of maintenance was received from a common fund "according to justice and equity", but there was little save conscience or public opinion to prevent a member from spending it unwisely — which he sometimes did.

This separatism of the Amana home, though expensive and not in accord with the principles of true communism, was an important factor in the long life of the Community of True Inspiration. And it made easy and natural the recent transition from the old order to the new which would not have been true of the communistic ideal of the "Unitary Dwelling" or the "Great House".

General housekeeping in old Amana was at its best a comparatively simple matter. At more or less regular intervals in each village there were "kitchen-houses" — a little larger than the ordinary dwelling — where the meals for the families in the immediate neighborhood were prepared and served.

Each kitchen was superintended by a woman appointed by the Elders; she was assisted by three or four of the younger women, each taking her turn in attending to the dining-room, preparing vegetables, cooking, and washing dishes.



Perhaps the most drastic social uprooting that took place in the recent transition from the old to the new tempo was the abandonment of the community kitchen-houses, where for so long the members had come together not alone to eat but also to pray. The early morning stir and bustle about these houses where the families of a neighborhood ate their meals (almost in silence) are no more. The daily deliveries of bread and milk and meat and ice have ceased. The iron-topped brick stove, with its kettles and boilers, its pots and ladles, is cold. The community dining-room, with its long narrow tables and its backless benches (as distinct an institution as the Church) has vanished.

A young Amana artist has attempted to express on canvas the spiritual moment of the last community supper with its mingled feelings of relief and regret — to Youth, a symbol of hope and opportunity; to Age, an evidence of shattered ideals and broken faith.

To-day every family owns its own house, and provides its own food and clothing, prepares its own meals, takes care of its own garden and pays its own bills — in short enjoys the sometimes doubtful blessings and all of the certain worries of a householder of the world who tries to make both ends meet.

But a member of this new joint-stock company



has this advantage over his brother of the outside world — he has a job; his wages are going up; he shares in any profit the corporation may make; and he gets his medical and dental service free and a discount on purchases at the corporation stores. His children receive a better education than he enjoyed, and he is reasonably sure that in case of misfortune the corporation will not let him suffer. He knows, too, that when death comes the Church will provide a final resting place in the cedar bordered cemetery of the old brotherhood.

At the time of the adoption of the new plan in 1932 the distinctive Amana costume was seldom seen, except among the elder Sisters. The shoulder shawl and the little black cap, designed to hide grace and suppress pride, had all but disappeared except at "meeting". Flashes of color among the younger Sisters brightened the once somber village streets on a summer afternoon. Many an old-time sunbonnet covered a modern bob, and the wearing of a wrist-watch or a string of beads, while admittedly more than for "necessity's sake", was no longer regarded as a "sin". To-day the attractive Amana maiden in her simple sport suit might easily pass for a student girl when she visits the neighboring college towns.

In an earlier day Amana grandmothers, mothers, and daughters dressed alike in the once fa-

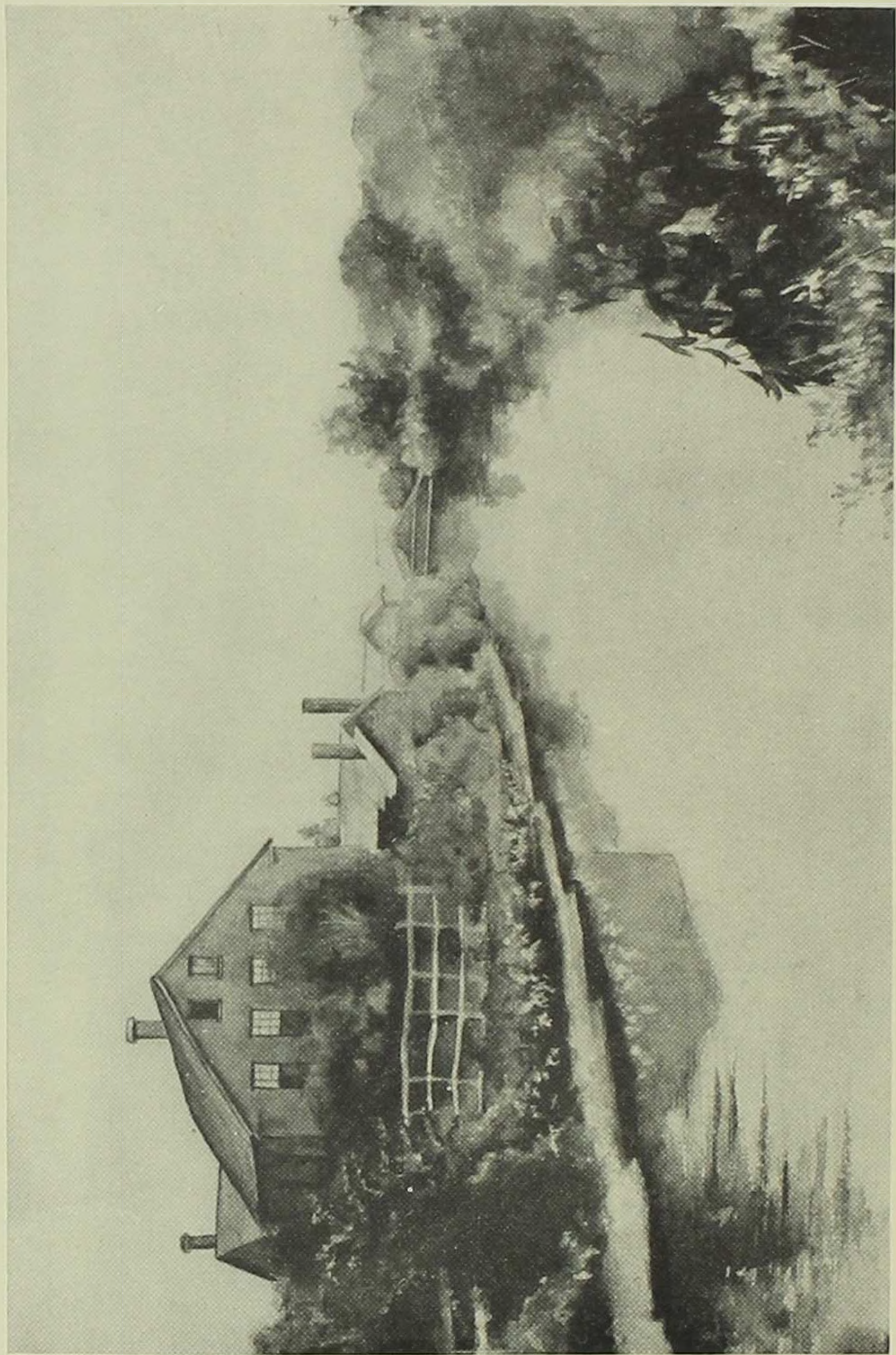




FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

### A KNITTING LESSON IN OLD AMANA





FROM A WATER-COLOR PAINTING BY BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

THE HOTEL IN AMANA ON THE MILL-RACE — AS IT WAS AND STILL IS



mous "Amana Calico" printed by the Community and sold from Maine to California. The calico printing industry was discontinued during the World War (which may have been a factor in the relaxing of the old austerity with regard to the dress of the women). More potent no doubt was the "emancipation" of the "growing-up youth" under the influence of the omnipresent automobile visitor.

For more than two hundred years Amana the Church, Amana the Community of True Inspiration, with its distinctive faith, had maintained its integrity. For almost ninety years its unique system of religious communism had remained in force; and material prosperity came to the seven federated villages with their churches and schools, their homes and gardens, their mills and factories, and their twenty-six thousand acres of land.

But with prosperity and "the easy going way", the influence of the old bond of brotherhood began to decline; and that subtle and mysterious power which in the past had made possible the seemingly impossible, which triumphed over persecutions in the Old World and survived the hardships of pioneering in the New World, slipped from its throne.

The old integrity, the old "solidarity", could not successfully resist the encroachments of the



world and the powerful influence of the machine age. The Forefathers had drawn a circle around the Community designed to keep the world out; but the world made a larger circle and drew the Community within its orb. No institutional circle (spiritual, political, or social) could bar the influences of an age that had opened up avenues of communication. The railroad, the automobile, the airplane, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, the daily newspaper and magazines, and the insistent gossip and "prattle" of hordes of "worldly-minded" visitors were the forces that broke the circle of seclusion. A machine civilization drew Amana into its inextricable circle.

With the loss of the old "solidarity", the number of workers declined and drones multiplied. And the few, upon whom the life of every organization comes at last to depend, acknowledged a deficit of almost half a million dollars and the possibility of a receivership for the old corporation. Amana the Church — Amana the Community of True Inspiration — faced a setting sun. Without its spiritual significance the communism of Amana was as empty as a chrysalis from which the butterfly had flown.

Happily in Amana's great crisis it was intelligent leadership that faced the fact that it was humanly impossible to maintain an early eighteenth



century culture in the competitive gear of a high-powered industrial age, and laid plans for a reorganization to meet the demands of a new day, to safeguard a church of noble tradition and at the same time put new life into the Community, and to protect the individual interests of a membership trained in religious communism and little versed in the ways of relentless competition.

The Community had admittedly wandered far from the glowing faith and idealism of the Forefathers. Was it Respiritualization or Reorganization that was needed? It was a question involving the interests and welfare of the individual members as well as of the group, and each in turn must take his responsibility in answering it.

With all the painstaking care that had characterized its more than two centuries of community endeavor, arrangements were made for an "open and honest" expression of opinion.

Was it possible now to return to the life of religious devotion and self-denial that made the old "covenant and promise" a vital truth? If not, was it the will of the Community to reorganize with the hope of preserving if possible "the ideals, principles and policies of the Founders", and at the same time make adjustments to the modern industrial world in which the Community found itself?

The vote was for Reorganization! The past



had lost its hold! Respiritualization in the terms of the Fathers was out of the question!

A Committee of Ten, duly appointed, began intensive work on a skeleton plan; and a Committee of Forty-seven — the first constituent assembly in the history of two hundred years and more — planned and considered, discussed and argued, proposed and rejected, compromised and amended, perspired and struggled night after night through the intense heat of the summer of 1931. In the end a plan for reorganization, to be submitted to the Board of Trustees and with their approval to the voting members, was unanimously adopted.

There was nothing vague, flabby, or irresolute in the new plan; nor was there anything radically revolutionary in it. There was no repudiation of the old, and no insistence on the new by a class-conscious group. There were no theoretical controversies regarding a social order, but a frank and courageous facing of existing conditions and a thoughtful and conservative readjustment to the age in which the Community found itself.

The plan was adopted by vote and received the signature of every voting member. And with its adoption Amana, The Community of True Inspiration, with its distinctive contribution to the history of religious communism passed into the realm



of history, and the industrial craft of the new Amana set sail on its great adventure as a one-man-one-vote democracy with wages and time clocks, a business manager from the outside, and articles of incorporation and by-laws which converted the former devout Inspirationists into stockholders, owners, and employees in a profit-making corporation. To say that the adoption of the New Plan promises to become the most significant moment in the history of the Community is not to overstate its importance.

But the Great Change meant much — very much. It meant the passing of a structure built up by the loving hands of seven generations, and the inauguration of a new “planned society”. It meant the separation of church and state, and the end of spiritual authority in temporal affairs. It meant the end of the Community of True Inspiration guided through two centuries by spiritual leaders endowed with “the gift of the Spirit and of Prophecy”. It meant the passing of the old communism and the adoption of a new order, characterized by a unique combination of capitalism, cooperation, and individualism. It meant the birth of a new sense of community freedom and a new sense of community responsibility. It meant that the last stand of the Community for isolation from the world had been lost.



As to legal status the Great Change meant the substitution of a joint-stock company, organized for pecuniary profit, for a corporation which operated without pecuniary aims. It meant the appraisal of all Community property and its equitable distribution to members in the form of stock certificates. It meant that in due course each member would receive one share of Class A Common Stock (which carried the privilege of voting) and shares of Prior Distributive Stock in proportion to his or her years of service in the Community.

In the matter of government the Great Change meant the end of a self-perpetuating church autocracy and the birth of a new one-man-one-vote democracy, with a governing board of thirteen Directors chosen by the voting stockholders from among their own number. It meant the establishment of a thoroughly representative government and a highly centralized administration.

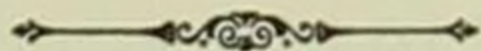
Furthermore, the new democracy at Amana does not mean that mediocrity is in the saddle. On the contrary, ability and experience are recognized and appreciated. By vote of the members of the Community, gifted leaders have been placed in control and kept there.

Oddly enough, while following no pattern or precedent and with no intention of promoting a theory, the new Amana Society — with its one-



man-one-vote democracy, ownership of the corporation by the workers in it, representation of the major industries on the Board of Directors, individual freedom that does not endanger the welfare of the group, and provision for the safeguarding of not only the economic life but spiritual and cultural values as well — incorporates many of the ideas suggested by modern economists for the regeneration of the outside world.

Judged by contemporary evidences, Amana's new plan is an economic success. But the new Amana Society is something more than a modern business structure, with emphasis on efficiency and the earning power of the dollar. It recognizes the mutual obligations of seven generations of intimate associations. It is determined to guard the interests of the old and the dependent. And there is a manifest desire to keep intact, as far as possible, the Community consciousness born of a precious heritage — a wealth of common aspirations and memories, and of spiritual assets that can not be weighed, nor measured, nor tabulated, nor charted. What the Great Change will ultimately mean, no one can say; for ultimate destinies are in the lap of the gods rather than in the foresight of men.



When four years ago I wrote "The Spiritual Amen" for the book on *Amana That Was and*



*Amana That Is*, it was with a sad heart. So far-reaching were the modifications implicit in the Great Change that had taken place on the first day of June, 1932, that I had grave doubts as to the future of the Amana Society.

I wondered whether Amana, in discarding so much of the old and in taking on so much that was new and modern, would lose the precious values for which so many generations of Inspirationists had lived and labored — values that had nothing to do with wages and dividends, spiritual values that in spite of the defects of the old organization had survived for more than two centuries.

I wondered whether the unique blending of capitalism, communism, and individualism could survive even its experimental stage.

I thought of the Church, and I wondered whether the note of its Spiritual Amen would continue to ring in the minds and hearts of an "emancipated" younger generation, or die, perhaps, in the hum and whirl of new activities and worldly interests.

I wondered whether the Church would relax a little in its "ordinances" and "admonitions" to meet Youth part way.

I wondered, too, whether Youth, impatient of restraint and eager to experiment with life, would recapture something of the spiritual values so eloquently echoed in the Amen of the ages.



Youth and Age together had faced a setting sun. Together they had toiled through compromise to agreement in reconstruction. And I wondered whether in the dawn of a new day they would stand together to greet a rising sun.

In the four years that have passed since the birth of the new Amana Society many of my doubts have disappeared, and some of my questions have been answered. It now seems to me that without any substantial loss of the things that make life really worth while, *the new Amana Society has achieved freedom for the individual, freedom for the community, and a modest measure of economic security.*

To be sure, there is nothing excessive in the economic prosperity of new Amana. And it is well that it is so. A too rapid advancement in things material would have tended to turn the minds of the people away from spiritual values. Nor has economic security been won without toil and self-denial. And that, too, is well; for it is through suffering and hardship that men come into communion with the deeper meanings of the Good Life.

With greater opportunities, new ways of living, and a wider acquaintance with the outside world, there seems to have come into the soul of Amana a new sense of what is vital and permanent in the old idealism. An evident pride in historical back-



ground, even among the "growing-up youth", seems to fulfill a yearning for old foundations beneath the new structure.

With all their new enthusiasms and new worldly interests the men and women of Amana are still, as of old, people of character, strong in moral fiber, fair and honest in their dealings, serious in purpose, with high aims, and by instinct and habit spiritually minded.

Amana the Church, Amana the Community of True Inspiration, with its "internal certainties" and noble traditions, has fulfilled its purpose and is no more. But the religious spirit of the *Urgross-eltern* is not dead: it still lives in the heart of Amana. It is still there, silent but powerful. Perhaps out of new Amana — with its undefined synthesis of capitalism, communism, and individualism, its greater freedom of initiative in meeting life's problems, its greater freedom of conscience in matters of religion and worship, and its innate love for the Good Life — there may emerge a community which men will some day write about and call Amana the Community of New Inspiration.

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH



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